

required by this Congress, by law, to submit two things with that budget: first of all, a plan about the number of ships that we have, a shipbuilding plan, so that we could look at that plan and see how it matches up to threats that we have around the world. And the second thing was an aviation plan. It just makes sense that you have a plan and know how many planes you're building and where they're going to be so that we can see that we can defend this country. As the ranking member of the Readiness Subcommittee it is important, I felt, for us to know those risk factors.

The law says specifically in 10 U.S. Code, section 231 that the Secretary has to submit a shipbuilding plan and then certify that this budget will meet it. The law also says he has to submit an aviation plan and certify that this budget will meet it. This year he simply refused to do it.

And, Mr. Speaker, when we then said what are our options, we thought, first of all, let's just be polite. So we wrote a letter, I wrote it, as ranking member of the Readiness Subcommittee of the Armed Services Committee, asking him to submit those plans. Do you know what we got? This is what we got: absolutely nothing.

So then we decided let's work in a bipartisan manner to see if we could correct that. So the Armed Services Committee issued a congressional inquiry demanding that the Secretary of Defense comply with the law and simply give us the plan for shipbuilding and aviation and certify that this budget would meet it. And, Mr. Speaker, this is exactly what we got: nothing.

Every member of the Armed Services Committee unanimously agreed that that information should be submitted by September 15 and issued that in the congressional inquiry. And, to date, the Secretary of Defense has refused to turn over those dollars, those figures, that certification, and those plans.

Mr. Speaker, I just ask you this: How can the Secretary of Defense look at our men and women in uniform and say we expect you to follow the law, to follow the statutes that Congress has passed and the President has signed, but they apply to you and not me?

I don't know what options we have; but I know this, Mr. Speaker, that I'm going to continue to come on this floor day after day after day until the Secretary complies with the law and gives the Armed Services Committee what he's supposed to give us, a shipbuilding plan and an aviation plan and the certifications that our budget will meet those so that we are defending the United States of America.

□ 1330

OUR FRIENDS IN EUROPE: YOU WILL NOT BE FORGOTTEN

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. SHIMKUS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. SHIMKUS. Mr. Speaker, a national missile defense: I am aghast at its being dropped by this administration.

First of all, we have a missile defense program, and that protects the west coast against a launch by a rogue nation, namely, North Korea. The national missile defense site proposed plan for Europe was designed primarily to defend our eastern coast against a rogue attack by Iran, so that's why I reject the arguments of this administration. This administration is citing concerns into Europe.

The benefit of the national missile defense site was that we got a twofer from this. Not only did we get a system, again, that's already in application on the western coast—we have a system in place to protect our eastern seaboard from a launch of an intercontinental ballistic missile, armed by a nuclear warhead by Iran against our eastern coast—but it also gives coverage to our allies and friends in the vast majority of Europe.

Our allies, the Poles and the Czechs, worked hard to educate their public to bring together consensus and to support the two sites—one being a radar site in the Czech Republic and another being an interceptor site in Poland.

What did they do based upon the negotiations with us? What is our response to them? Our response to them is to now reject and to turn away from this site.

Now, the launch sites in Poland are a few interceptors, not the hundreds of offensive missiles that are placed in Russia. The interceptors were never a threat to Russia. However, this administration now bows to the totalitarian regime in Russia at the rejection of our friends and allies in the democratic countries in Eastern Europe—our friends the Poles and the Czechs—who have worked hard, who have solid democratic institutions, who support the war on terror, and who are our allies in the battle of freedom. So we side with the Russians in opposition to our Eastern European friends and neighbors.

You know, Russia may have been successful in causing this administration to back away from its commitment, but I want them to understand there are still many, many Members in this Chamber who will not kowtow to you or bow to the threats imposed by a reemergent Russia. Russia has meddled in the affairs of the Eastern European countries for long enough, most recently in the invasion of Georgia, meddling in the Ukraine and trying to destabilize their neighbors on the borders.

We will continue to fight for those freedom-loving, democratic institutions in Eastern Europe, especially for the countries I mentioned before—the Ukraine and Georgia—and for the people who want democracy in Belarus. We will not allow a reemergent Russia to try to build a new sphere of influence that will deprive these people of freedom.

This battle on national missile defense is the first victory for Russia in, again, attacking the credibility of the leadership of our country and in causing us to back down to commitments we made, not only to our citizens on the eastern coast but also to our allies and friends in Europe as a whole, and particularly to the Eastern European countries.

For years, the Eastern European countries have been called the “captive nations” because these were the countries which were under the totalitarian regime, under the old Soviet Socialist Republic system. They were deprived of their freedoms for decades. Of course, that is the desire of this new emergent Russia—to bring them back into that sphere. It is disappointing that this administration didn't stand strong in support of freedom and democracy and keep the movement on the national missile defense reaching forward.

We look forward to continuing this debate. I just want to send a message to our friends in Europe that you will not be forgotten.

THE PROGRESSIVE CAUCUS MESSAGE HOUR

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 2009, the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. ELLISON) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. ELLISON. Mr. Speaker, I am KEITH ELLISON, here to claim the time.

The Progressive Caucus message hour, which comes to the House floor every week, week after week, with a Progressive message will be short tonight. We want to let our Republican colleagues know that. Tonight, though short, it will be a very potent and effective message because it is a Progressive message.

Obviously, everything these days is health care. Health care is a crucial issue, but it's important to understand that, from a Progressive standpoint, health care reform is part of an overall package of reform for middle and working class people in America.

How are you doing with your family budget when you see, over the last 10 years, that health care premiums have increased, that deductibles are increasing and that copays are increasing? How is it going when you see your neighbors are foreclosed upon and when the houses in your neighborhood are seeing a reduction in value? That's real wealth you're losing with this foreclosure crisis.

In a Progressive vision of this world, we see middle class people and working class people—people who are making only a little bit, who are making only minimum wage—who are actually seeing their wages rise, who are seeing their health care costs level off and go down, who are seeing their home values go up, and who are seeing the doors to the universities remain open so that young people can have real opportunities in this America.